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# THESIS

EXCELLENCE IN THE KOREAN AIR FORCE  
FIGHTER SQUADRONS: VIEW OF THE  
FIGHTER PILOTS

by

Kim, Chae Keun

December 1985

Thesis Advisor:

Reuben T. Harris

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Excellence In The Korean Air Force  
Fighter Squadrons: View Of The  
Fighter Pilots

by

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Major, Korean Air Force  
B.S., Civil Aviation College, 1976

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN MANAGEMENT

from the

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## ABSTRACT

This is a preliminary study of excellence of the Korean Air Force fighter squadron. The study identifies the attributes associated with outstanding fighter squadrons based upon interviews with fighter pilots who are currently enrolled as students at the Naval Postgraduate School.

After reviewing environmental, structural, and cultural backgrounds of fighter squadron of the Korean Air Force, the qualities of excellence evident from the interviews are described and compared with those of the U.S. Air Force fighter squadrons. The seven attributes which contribute to the excellence of Korean Air Force fighter squadrons consist of unique culture, strong cohesion, member's satisfaction, concern and dedication, flight leadership, and respect for authority.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. INTRODUCTION

As a Korean student of the Organization Development curriculum at the Naval Postgraduate School, the author's concern has been about the possibility of establishing an Organization Development system in the Korean Air Force. Organization Development is a relatively new field in Korea, and it has not yet been introduced into the military. For this reason, this study should be beneficial to the Korean Air Force in that it defines a behavioral model of excellence. It could serve not only as reference data for a future Organization Development system, but also as a teaching aid to those who wish to learn from reality.

This research is a pilot study of excellence in Korean Air Force fighter squadrons. The study is based on questionnaire data and intensive interviews conducted with 23 Korean Air Force fighter pilots, including one general officer and two lt. colonels. Initially, this study was conceived as a comprehensive study of excellence in the Korean Air Force, but geographical distance and security constraints prevented access to a wider range of data sources. Nevertheless, the opinions and experiences of Korean fighter pilots involved in this study have produced a rich and useful data base.

This research sought to identify squadrons which have achieved outstanding performance, and then to examine their makeup, stresses, management, and leadership. Five outstanding squadrons were selected by the consensus of fighter pilots currently enrolled as students at the Naval Postgraduate School. The outstanding squadrons were nominated for their distinct identities in performance of gunnery, safety record, and history. These identities were not measured by numerical indicators, instead they agreed upon and confirmed by consensus of those who were interviewed.

#### B. ORGANIZATION OF THIS STUDY

Chapter II describes the Korean Air Force in terms of structure, culture, and environment. Chapter III describes the cultures found in excellent squadrons. Chapter IV is on the level of cohesion found in excellent fighter squadrons. This is based on the views and experiences of Korean Air Force pilots attending the Naval Postgraduate School. Chapter V is about the caring attitude found in excellent squadrons. Chapter VI describes how satisfaction is generated in excellent squadrons.

Chapter VII describes the prominent role of the flight leaders in excellent squadrons. Chapter VIII describes methods of training and attitudes towards safety. Chapter IX is about the squadron commanders' leadership as evaluated by the pilots from excellent squadrons. Chapter X is a



comparative analysis of excellence of the United States Air Force and Korean Air Force. This chapter was designed for the benefit of author and other students who study excellence in fighter squadrons in general. Chapter XI concludes with the attributes that are responsible for excellence, and Chapter XII offers recommendation.

## II. BACKGROUND OF THE KOREAN AIR FORCE

Since the Korean Air Force fighter squadron exists in a culture and society different from that of the United States, it is necessary to understand a little about the Korean historical and cultural background.

### A. ENVIRONMENTAL BACKGROUND.

#### 1. Status of An Armed Truce

Korea is a peninsular country surrounded by the People's Republic of China, the Soviet Union, and Japan. In 1945, Korea gained its independence from Japan after 36 years of occupation. In 1948, due to the conflict of interest between two superpowers (the United States and the Soviet Union), two different regimes were established against the will of the Korean people.

In 1950, South Korea was attacked by North Korean forces. After three years, the Korean War was temporarily ended by the signing of the 1953 Cease-Fire Agreement between the representatives of the United States, North Korea, and the Peoples's Republic of China. The resultant Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) between North and South Korea poses a significant defence problem for South Korea since the capital city of Seoul is located only 30 miles south of the DMZ. Solution of this problem constrains the flexibility of Korean military assets due to the closeness of the threat, the Korean Air

Force(KAF) must place large portions of its resources on an alert status, and fly numerous tactical missions. This severely restricts the time that the KAF can devote to training and developing an elite corps of pilots.

## 2. Outnumbered Air Power Threats

The Korean Air Force is outnumbered in both manpower and equipment. According to the Military Balance, the North Korean Air Force has 51,000 personnel and 700 combat aircraft [Ref. 1: pp. 82-84]. This number is roughly three times that of the South Korean Air Force. Despite South Korean efforts to fill the gap, the air power ratio has remained almost constant at a level of three to one. In this outnumbered situation, the Korean Air Force has attempted to establish a "Force Elite", and to maintain current combat equipment at its maximum availability.

## B. STRUCTURAL BACKGROUND

### 1. Tactical Size And Centralized System

The Korean Air Force consists of three commands under the Air Force Chief of Staff: the Tactical Air Command, the Education and Training Command, and the Logistics Command. Under the control of the Tactical Air Command, there are 15 Fighter squadrons, and other special purpose squadrons. The chain of command is via the Wing Commands. The Tactical Air Command directly controls operational missions through "hot lines", and checks the number of sorties planned for training. Squadron commanders are

only responsible for the execution of operational and administrative orders and directives, and have little control over planning missions.

## 2. Vertical And Lateral Coordinations

Under the highly centralized system, communication networks are fully developed along the vertical chains of command. Due to the size of KAF, contacts between the squadrons are infrequent, and little coordination with other squadrons is essential. Transfers between Wings are rare.

## C. CULTURAL BACKGROUND

As an aid to understanding the Korean culture and the traditional Korean thoughts within the military, certain national traits should be discussed.

### 1. Filial Piety And Loyalty

The basic philosophy of Korean society is Confucianism [Ref. 2: p. 113]. The Yi-Dynasty adopted and imposed Confucianism on the Korean people during its long reign of 500 years. The impact has greatly affected the way of life for Koreans. Many of the Korean customs and manners are derived from Confucianism. Among many traditional values and customs, loyalty is probably the most influential factor in military culture. The current compulsory military service system is based upon the people's loyalty to the nation. This is reflected in leadership's authority which is maintained and based on the fact that loyalty to a leader (or an elder) goes beyond the rules and regulations.



Generally, leaders attempt to lead by charismatic personality, not by the system. This is well illustrated in the hidden stories of Kings and great Korean leaders of the past. [Ref. 3: p. 64].

## 2. The Spirit Of Elite Youth Corps(Wharangdo)

The spirit of Elite Youth Corps (Wharangdo)<sup>1</sup> has been one of the spiritual pillars of Korean culture, especially in the military. If Confucianism is viewed as a foundation of the Korean social culture, Wharangdo may be viewed as the foundation of military culture.

Wharangdo originated in the Silla-Dynasty (4th to 9th Century) to train the Youth Corps. The spirit of Wharangdo has been inherited in the military throughout the Koryo and the Yi-Dynasties to modern times. The code of Wharangdo is taught in the Korean Military Academies, and in military educational systems such as the Reserved Officers Corps in universities.

The five commandments of Wharangdo states<sup>1</sup> that one should:

- be loyal to one's king ( Country).
- be filial to one's parents.
- keep faith with one's friends.

---

<sup>1</sup>A group of young people who were trained and educated to be elite by Silla Dynasty. Later, this group contributed greatly to the unification of Korean Peninsula in the 9th Century.

- not retreat on the battle field.
- be careful in taking a life.

### 3. Pride In Being A Pilot

Airplanes were introduced to Korea during the Japanese occupation. The first Korean aviator was An, Chang Nam; he was trained by the Japanese. When he was introduced to Koreans in the 1940's, he became the national hero(similar to Charles Lindberg). At that time, the airplane was a subject of awe and curiosity to Koreans who had been somewhat isolated from the outside world.

During the Korean war, the Korean Air Force produced many legendary heroes who fought bravely despite poor equipment and lack of personnel. After the Korean War, for their outstanding performance and loyalty, the pilots were honored as the "Vigilant Guard of 30 million Koreans". After this historical honor, the rigorous selection process and slim opportunities to be accepted to become a pilot reinforced the ambition of Korean young men to become a part of this elite corps.

## D. DESCRIPTION OF THE KOREAN FIGHTER SQUADRON

### 1. Structure of a Typical Fighter Squadron

A fighter squadron is the first-line unit in the Korean Air Force system. The size and manning of typical fighter squadrons do not differ much from the U.S Air Force



system except in the manning of enlisted personnel.<sup>2</sup> Korean fighter squadrons are multi-mission squadrons, ranging from air defence interdiction to close air support. In addition to the tactical missions assigned by Tac Air Command, numerous training missions have become a chronic burden to fighter squadrons.

A squadron is composed of four flights which perform different jobs. This fixed flight system is not extended to the composition of flying flights. Flying flights are scheduled for the whole squadron, regardless of its fixed flight system.

## 2. Leadership

The term of squadron commander is about one year. Staff officers from higher commands such as Wing, Tac Air Command, and Air Force Headquarters are selected and assigned as squadron commanders. However, pilots' tours are usually between five to seven years, since there is not much lateral change of station for pilots.

---

<sup>2</sup>This is confidential information in the Korean Air Force. However squadron systems of both Air Forces are very similar except for the number of enlisted personnel assigned to the squadron which is bit smaller than those assigned to the U.S Air Force U.S Air Force fighter squadrons.

### 3. Characteristics Of Pilots

According to the research of the Aero Medical Center of the Korean Air Force, [Ref. 4: pp. 18-19], pilots are a generally single-minded and highly dedicated group, working against stress imposed by their environment. They have been trained to obey rules and to respect authority because of the rigorous selection and training processes.. This has produced an unique fighter squadron that reflects eliteness, aggressiveness, and high discipline. Inside the squadrons, the merits of seniority are highly respected by juniors--even six months of seniority is enough to form the relationship of senior and junior.

### III. UNIQUENESS OF CULTURE

Throughout the interviews, the pilots of outstanding squadrons displayed radiating confidence and pride. The pilot's stories exemplified their cultural identities of fighting spirit, discipline, team spirit, and methods of inspiring their people to excellence, which were distinct from average squadrons.

#### A. DECISIVE RADIO COMMUNICATION

The 435<sup>3</sup> squadron's radio work in the air was well-known to the people in Yong Jung Bombing Range. One pilot who worked there as a controller said that it was exciting to hear the decisive and powerful radio work of the 435 squadron's flights. Decisive and powerful radio communication attributes to their excellence in the air. In brief electronic communications, they displayed the confidence, coordination, and proficiency in the performance of their mission.

---

<sup>3</sup>The numerical name of squadrons are fictitious. Anonymity was promised to interviewees.

## B. WINNING SQUADRON--EVEN IN SPORTS

One aspect of the Olympic spirit is "peace through participation". In Korean fighter squadrons, sports exist to be won. The price of losing is known from past experience. It would be worse to lose squadron morale than to lose a game against competitors.

An inspired leader in an excellent squadron was desperately seeking talented sports players as new men were assigned to the Wing. He knew the magic of sports in the military, because as one officer said: "Cohesiveness and coordination comes from sports."

## C. WORK HARD, PLAY HARD

Not everything about being a member of an outstanding squadron is easy; at times it can be rough. An officer from the 533 squadron confessed that often he felt himself struggling against the pressure of excellence. To meet the standards of the squadron he sometimes sacrificed his personal life to prepare for important missions.

When I was selected as a member of the gunnery competition for our squadron, I was very happy. But, for at least two months, I didn't have any private time with my family. All my time was devoted to meetings with gunnery members. Sometimes it's really tough to work in our squadron.

Another pilot from the 434 squadron agreed that their squadron was also tough place to work. However, he said that

he would rather work for a tough squadron than for a easy-going squadron, since his squadron was more exciting. When asked what was exciting, he cited frequent social activities such as drinking bouts<sup>4</sup> after games, and recognition for one's works.

One major officer from the 434 squadron described his squadron as having rhythm. In other words, his squadron knew how to work and how to play. He explained, " We know how to work and how to play. Somebody called us a crazy squadron when they saw us drinking together. But, we are different when we are at work. ----- No squadron can beat us in flying, sports, or even in drinking."

#### D. FLYING TALKS

A major from the 435 squadron recalled his experience when he was assigned to the 435 squadron immediately after graduating from the Training Wing:

In a word, it was tough. Nobody talked to me when I was in training for Combat Readiness Training. When I was in Training Wing as a student pilot, I heard that the fighter squadron was an exciting and interesting place. But it was not true for me at that time. If I made a mistake in the air, cruel punishment such as running with flight gear waited on the ground. One night, I had a chance to talk with Major Park, one of my instructors. I asked him why it was so different from what I heard in Training Wing, and I complained about their treatment toward me and other trainees. He answered, "Tell me in the air; prove yourself with flying. You are not yet a

---

<sup>4</sup>In the Korean military, there is no alcoholic abuse problem.



pilot, just a Combat Readiness Trainee. You'll know what the fighter squadron is after finishing your training."

#### E. SOCIALIZATION

How do fighter squadrons maintain their uniqueness of their squadrons to foster the promising future of their squadrons? A pilot who stayed in the 436 squadron for four years described their socialization as follows:

When we arrived at the 436 squadron as new guys, one of the flight leaders frequently visited my BOQ after work. He talked about everything in and out of squadron. He explained the personality of the commander, operations office, and other flight leaders. He loaned me his flying log which he wrote when he was new. Most of all, he emphasized that our squadron was different, and superior to other squadrons in the Wing. Of course, We had more home work and less weekend freedom than those in other squadrons. Four years later, as a scheduling officer, I was assigned to help a new man; and I did so in the same way to make him superior than his peers in another squadron.

#### F. TEAM SPIRIT

"Team work, it is a synchronized breathing." a pilot from the 435

##### 1. Canopies Closed Together

The Blue Angels, a U.S military acrobatic team, have been a behavioral model for Korean Air Force pilots. Even their tragic accident in which all four planes crashed while recovering from a vertical dive has been taught the pilot Training Wing as a model of team spirit. Recently, the 533 squadron decided to close canopies of the flights



simultaneously at the last chance inspection area, having been inspired by a demonstration film of the Blue Angels. One lt. colonel said:

It may be nothing more than a simple switch operation to close canopies at the same time. However, the attitude of the 533's pilots who attempt to close canopies simultaneously are different from those of other squadron pilots, since the 533's pilots always ensure and express their teamwork by closing canopies at the same time.

## 2. Radio Check In

A similar example was seen in the 435 squadron. Their well trained radio work was known to the pilots throughout the Wing. One officer from another squadron said that their voices sounded explosive and tense; and most of all, they radiated suppression. What accounted for this impression? A major from the 435 squadron said that it was nothing more than a synchronized breathing, keeping exact intervals between flight members.

Excellent squadrons seem to know how to initiate teamwork. They use any and all means to establish teamwork.

## 3. Sharing Time Together

What has been done to develop teamwork in excellent squadrons? As seen in the previous examples, formalized behaviors are emphasized. In addition, they try to establish an informal base for teamwork. Most of them have a private office for each flight, and group activities are initiated by the squadron commander. One squadron has a

flight briefing one day a week instead of an every day mass briefing. In other squadrons, funds for an informal flight meeting once a month are provided by the squadron. "We spend more time together, formally and informally," stated one officer. Excellent squadrons build up their teamwork by sharing time together.

#### G. MAINTAINING GOOD OLD WAYS

In outstanding fighter squadrons, uniqueness and creativity are often observed in such activities as developing new visual aids, changing physical layouts of squadron rooms, etc. For this reason, it is very easy to mislabel them as a whimsical squadron. That is not true; inside the squadron, good-old-ways are maintained for esprit and morale.

If we consider the climate of a squadron as an intangible form of heritage based on tradition, the age-old Squadron Standard Operation Procedure(SOP), and squadron meditation time and energy conservation activities might be considered as tangible forms of heritage.

In fact, many campaigns and seasonal movements pass through the squadron in the course of years. Most are transient and forgotten. However, this is not the case of outstanding squadrons. These are developed and maintained like old trophies on display.

# 1. Squadron Meditation Time

In the late 70's, all the fighter squadrons were ordered to provide for a meditation time every morning. Meditation tapes and procedures were issued by Air Force Headquarters. After about two years, meditation time disappeared from most squadron's morning briefing. Numerous repetitive hearing of the tapes made them boring, and the pilots were irritated with the complex procedure.

However, squadrons like 434 and 436 maintained the morning meditation, although not every day. Also, the content of the meditation tapes were revised, and edited and recorded by talented enlisted and civilian women employees.

Every other morning, they spent seven to ten minutes of meditation with deep breathing. They were asked to think about their country, family, squadron, cohesion, safety, etc., during the meditation time. One officer from 434 squadron stated: "Sometimes we couldn't do this three times a week. But, the number of times is not important. It helps us, that's important. Especially during gunnery competition, I was encouraged through meditation. Some people don't like it but the majority of pilots want to keep it."

## 2. Takwondo Exercise

"If it is something good, we keep it," said one officer. While talking to the pilots from excellent squadrons about their daily life, I found that some old activities and programs are still alive and maintained. Some of the examples are Takwondo exercise<sup>5</sup> in the morning and an energy conservation program. In fact, those activities and programs are not what is important, rather it is the pilots' spirit behind these activities which is important. "If something is good, then keep it." Where does this spirit come from? It comes from pride and eagerness to establish something beneficial for their squadron.

---

<sup>5</sup>Korean traditional martial art for physical self-defence.

#### IV. STRONG COHESIVENESS

Pilots from excellent squadrons emphasized the growth of cohesiveness through harmony between people in their squadron. "If there is anything attributable to the fame of our squadron, it must be our strong cohesiveness", said one officer from the 436 squadron. And this same sentiment frequently expressed by pilots from other excellent squadrons.

##### A. COMMAND CONCERN

In an excellent squadron, a commander does not believe that cohesion comes naturally, instead, he cultivates cohesion in his squadron. An officer from the 436 squadron said: "Our commander always tried to eliminate possible discordance in our squadron. One of his efforts might be to reward those members who worked in support areas". A pilot from another squadron said: "Even when he praised or blamed, our commander did not point out one specific group. His messages were addressed to all of the squadron. Such behavior by our commander made us feel united."



## B. FLIGHT LEADERS PROMOTE COHESIVENESS

Asked to describe the most important factor in cohesiveness in their squadron, harmony of the flight leader group was mentioned more than leadership in promoting cohesion of pilots from excellent squadrons. A major from the 435 squadron pointed out the flight leader group and explained:

They have no conflicts in their desk jobs or in personal relationships. Of course, they have worked for a long time with each other, more so than with any others in the squadron. But, I don't think that is the reason why relations are harmonious. If relations are not harmonious, nobody would follow the orders. That's our norm.

Whatever the reasons are, a harmonious flight leader group exists in excellent squadrons, and they make their squadron cohesive. A major who had worked as fourth flight leader told me,

When I was newly assigned as fourth leader, my senior flight leader advised me to act as the leader. It meant that I should be careful in every respect. One thing he emphasized was that flight leaders should talk in the same voice. He said that to the pilots we ought to appear as a group, not as an individual. Actually, we worked that way. At first, I felt that my responsibility was interfered with by senior leaders' advice and corrections in the guise of coordination. Soon, I realized that my words were perceived as a voice of a flight leader group by the fellow pilots.

## C. CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH MAINTENANCE

"Thank the maintenance people for their sacrifices and loyalty." A major from the 436 squadron emphasized sacrifices made by maintenance people to provide the best service to the squadrons. For them, regular duty hours were nothing

more than rhetoric. To launch the first regular flight, they had to be at the hangar by at least 5 o'clock in the morning, whether it was a cold winter, or a short summer night. To prepare for the day's flight, they remained at the hangar until they could get enough aircraft ready to support the needs of the fighter squadron.

They were inseparably related to the pilots. Their quality of service was evaluated by pilots, and the pilot's safety depended upon the quality of maintenance service. To the maintenance people, the pilots' glory was also their glory.

Here is a story of legendary partnership between a 436 pilot and his maintenance support. Together, they achieved the titles of Top Gun and best supporter.

Captain Chung<sup>6</sup> was an ambitious pilot who didn't want to be second to any other pilot. He was selected as a member of gunnery flight for the 436 squadron. One month before competition, he felt that something was wrong in his fire control radar system. He asked his maintenance sergeant to correct the system. The maintenance sergeant corrected the fire control radar system by bore sighting. It took a lot of time. Still, Captain Chung was not happy with the performance of his radar. He asked again to have the system corrected. The sergeant tried again over the weekend.

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<sup>6</sup>The names of people are fictitious.

Still, he had to bore sight one more time to make his pilot happy. Finally, the problem was solved--four days before the competition. The story did not end there. The sergeant wrapped the radar with a blanket at nights to prevent humidity penetration.

In the 436 squadron, pilots and maintenance personnel maintain close relationships. Their relationship rise above their ranks. Young pilots never use low forms of speech<sup>7</sup> to the chief sergeants of maintenance. Pilots respect their age and are loyal to them. Pilots sometimes visit the homes of maintenance personnel with a bottle of white liquor. "We can be open with a bottle of white liquor," said one pilot.

#### D. ATHLETIC GAMES AND SOCIAL MEETINGS.

Sports games such as mini-soccer and volley-ball seem to be a common method of building cohesiveness in excellent squadrons. One officer from the 533 squadron said:

Sometimes, people call our squadron a soccer club. We usually play soccer when flying missions stand down. There are many benefits of a soccer game. First, physical strength comes from sports. Second, a fighting spirit is required to play the game. Most of all, we can be closer with each other after the games. While drinking a glass of beer or coke, we cheer and exchange jokes in a friendly environment.

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<sup>7</sup>In Korea, there are three forms of speech: respectively high form to senior, normal form to peer and low form to junior.

Officers from other excellent squadrons mentioned similar stories with respect to sports in units.

Excellent squadrons seem to have lots of informal meetings. Many pilots recall the warm, and delightful climate of their informal meetings. Usually, drinking bouts are held to applaud good performances or to console failures. In this environment, squadron members resolve conflicts and reinforce smooth relationship with each other. One officer said that "it was more comfortable and easier to be open in an informal climate."



## V. SQUADRONS ARE FAMILIES

"The era of requesting blind loyalty was gone." an Army general

Stories about caring people are frequently told by pilots from excellent squadrons. The spirit of concern and mutual support is spread throughout a squadron's way of life. As a pilot stated: "Like a family, we try to care for each other. This helps our pilots be more proficient in flying. If needed, we are willing to jointly help to solve each member's personal problems."

### A. SELF HELP

Excellent squadron members tend to see themselves as members of a big family. One officer said: "We live like a family, sharing each other's joys and sorrows." When a bachelor pilot gets married, or one's father has his 61st birthday, all the squadron members give a present in the name of the squadron. Even more, when a sad thing happens to one's parent, they give money.<sup>8</sup> and his peers accompany him to visit his home town to help him.

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<sup>8</sup>It is Korean custom to send money as a greeting.



## B. FAMILY CARE

During the interviews, pilots from excellent squadrons repeatedly mentioned family care matters. Pilots and some of the maintenance people should live on base housing to provide a high degree of readiness status against possible hostile situation. This kind of community life influences the life style of a pilot's family. Their private outings or friends' visits to them are not the same as those of civilians because of security problems. More or less, relationships between families follows that of their husbands' profession, and squadron.

In this situation, let's look at the successful stories of caring for families in some excellent squadrons.

### 1. Wedding Anniversary Day Off

In 436 squadron, every pilot's wedding anniversary is celebrated by the squadron. The squadron provides a wedding cake and gives the pilot one day off. This day off is not given for the pilot alone. It is also an expression of the squadron's thanks to his wife for her devotion to her husband who one of the most valuable assets of the squadron.

### 2. Your Parents Are My Parents Too

As explained in Chapter II, respect to parents and to elders is one of the significant social norms in Korea. But, pilots suffer from the conflict between social norms and work. They have rare opportunities to visit their parents and relatives because of their missions and work,

though concerned leaders try to give their subordinates sufficient leave to do their duty as a member of a family.

One commander of an excellent squadron showed an outstanding example. A major from the 435 squadron explained:

When the parents of his pilots visit their son, Lt. Col Chang always showed his concern. He usually visited the pilot's home to meet the parents or invited them to his home for dinner. While talking with the parents, he politely expressed his sorrow for their son's rare visits to them, and explained about a pilot's busy life. Sometimes, he asked the pilot to invite his parents to visit when his subordinate seemed to have a domestic discord. He knew that one could not quarrel in front of one's parents. Under this kind of leadership, who will not give his loyalty to a commander?"

### 3. Thank You, Wives!

In excellent squadrons, wives contribute to the welfare of the squadron, the squadron never forgets their contributions. Throughout the interviews, many examples were mentioned. "They (wives of pilots) bought new blankets for the alert room with funds raised from activities such as bazaars," said a bachelor officer from an excellent squadron. In another squadron, wives provided volunteer food service while their husbands were involved in Team Spirit Exercise.<sup>9</sup> To express their thanks, one squadron held an open house and a family picnic on base. Similarly, another

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<sup>9</sup>Largest annual field training exercise for selected Korean Forces and deployed U.S Forces.

squadron conducts sporting events and invite wives and children. The underlying spirit behind these events is that a squadron always cares for their families.

## VI. NEED SATISFACTION MACHINE

An excellent squadron may be compared to a machine producing the satisfaction needed by the individual members. Squadron members are pleased because they can challenge themselves, and because even their smallest contributions are recognized. They are happy to be members of a proud squadron known throughout the Air Force.

### A. REWARDS

The 436 squadron conducts "Bear-Award" program for hard workers. At the end of each year, pilots who were selected as "Bears" are honored in front of their peers and families with a bronze control sticks award. This award is given not for one's outstanding performance, but for one's hidden and unrecognized works such as more duty on night alert than their peers, or for efforts in fixing and repairing the furniture of the squadron. Often, it is easy to disregard the importance of routine tasks such as night alerts. However, the excellent squadrons like the 436 never forget to give thanks to the silent and hard working "bears".

## B. MATCH PERSONALITY WITH JOB

In the 537 squadron, every pilot is assigned as manager of something, such as fish-tank manager, lounge manager, civil engineering manager and manager of squadron parties. None of these jobs are specified in squadron hierarchy. Pilots are assigned to these jobs after their seniors observe their talents. The jobs are accomplished with professional pride since they coincide with personal interests and hobbies. Even the wing commander knows the name of the manager in charge of the fish-tank in the 537 squadron. This job is too demanding to be done by an amateur fish-care person.

A pilot from 537 squadron said: "With these kinds of small jobs, we can not only prove our importance in the squadron, but also gain release from the routine task of flying."

## C. UPWARD MOBILITY

A pilot can not be happy when he finds himself at "12 o'clock" from his competition in the air. All pilots try to be behind their enemy at "six o'clock." He needs lots of training and education to become proficient.

A pilot from the 434 squadron said that he was proud of himself because he was assigned alert duty ahead of his peers in another squadron. The reason he could be ahead of his peers in the other squadron is that the 434 squadron set



a priority on achieving promotions of lower level pilots to a higher level.

This policy is a very smart approach to improve the squadron combat readiness and performance. Through this policy, the 434 squadron could retain more element and flight leaders than other squadrons. The abundant resource of elements and flight leaders boosted training of wingmen pilots, while other squadrons suffered from the lack of trainers. This is the reason that an ambitious wingman of the 434 squadron could be ahead of his peers.

A training oriented squadron seems to have another benefit in terms of satisfaction. In the squadron hierarchy, there are not many steps involved in upward mobility for the pilots. They can reach the position of flight leaders after five years of service. However, there is a grade system, although it is not specified in the wiring diagram. The grade system is composed of three levels: flight leaders, element leaders, and wingmen. Again, each level is divided into three sublevels by one's skill and flight hours. In this system, most pilots are eager to upgrade their qualifications. And excellent squadrons, as shown by the 434 squadron, provide more upward mobility for their pilots through training.

## VII. FLIGHT LEADER CENTERED SQUADRON

Excellent squadrons seem to have a group of people who devote themselves to the task of keeping the squadron performing in top manner. The flight leaders have clear job descriptions of what they should do, but their range of activities also go beyond their simple job descriptions.

The pilots described the roles of flight leaders in different ways. The flight leaders are called the "golden members," "the core of the squadron," and sometimes "the bridge between commander and pilots." Though they are called by different names, the names themselves imply their important position in the squadron hierarchy.

Now let's look at the flight leaders more closely: what they are, and how do they perform in outstanding squadrons?

### A. LIVING STANDARD OF THE SQUADRON

One major said:

The performance of our squadron is the performance of our flight leaders. In my experience good records in gunnery competition never comes from weak flight leaders. When I was in the 434 squadron, there were superb pilots of flight leaders who were brilliant in the air and in ground desk jobs. I believe that they were the source of high performance of the 434 squadron at that time. Why? Because they could perform even the hardest maneuvers in the last chapter of the tactical air combat manual.

They have a higher standard of performance, obtained through the years of training and their personal efforts to excel. Frequently, flight leaders are the products of their squadron, since they are trained and raised as flight leaders within their own squadron. There are rare cases of some fight leaders who transferred from another squadron.

A former member of the 435 squadron was still proud of having been the first butterfly pattern<sup>10</sup> player in the Korean Air Force, which was initiated by one of his flight leaders. His flight leader was well known for his aggressive language in the air. He was called "dirty mouth" by his fellows. He did not hesitate to dress down a member during flight training. But, most pilots liked him because they knew his aggressive language was just another expression of his passion to shape up his pilots.

In an outstanding squadron, there are usually flight leaders of outstanding caliber who are eager to enhance the quality of their pilots. One pilot from the 533 squadron described an ambitious flight leader in his squadron:

As a pilot, he is brilliant. He was named seven times as a Top Gun in Gunnery Competition. He has his own notes of bombing methods. He consistently insists that we should fly by science, not by feel. But, the most impressive thing about him is his enthusiasm to teach his pilots. His flight never lands with unnecessary fuel. By thorough mission planing, he reduces prolonged set up time in air combat maneuvers, and hence his

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<sup>10</sup>A type of air to air gun attack pattern.

flight can have more attack tries and defensive maneuvers. In Yong Jung bombing range, he is known as the "invader of the 533," since he frequently stopped by the Yong Jung bombing range without scheduling after finishing his mission and make dry passes until the arrival of scheduled flight.

## B. COMMUNICATION BRIDGE

One of the important roles of flight leaders is to be the bridge of communication between the commander and pilots. While working with fellow pilots, flight leaders get first hand information from their pilots. Pilots' comments, complaints, and personal opinions on general squadron matters come to the attention of flight leaders whether they seek the information or not. Not everything should be reported to a commander. Smart flight leaders know when and what to report. One officer said, "Good flight leaders have the ability to filter information and to report it at an appropriate moment."

For example, a prudent flight leader does not report directly to the commander the hidden stories of near misses or careless spins directly to the commander. If necessary, he informs the operations officer and other flight leaders to warn the other pilots. He selects an appropriate to report to the commander.

The flight leaders are not always the spokesman for fellow pilots; sometimes they are the messenger of a commander. They explain the reasons behind a commander's sudden order and persuade pilots to follow the order.



Under Korean culture of a vertical society, as a low ranker it is not easy to talk directly to the commander. Also commanders or senior people do not talk in specific terms, since talkativeness is not a virtue to those in command. In this situation, flight leaders are necessary to act as a bridge between squadron hierarchies.

### C. LEAD BY ACTION

How do intelligent flight leaders lead their pilots? One pilot answered that flight leaders should lead by action, while a commander leads by words. His brief description of the flight leadership was supported by the comments of other officers.

Often, there is time consuming work, such as rearranging squadron furniture and displays, gardening, snow removal work, and other jobs. One officer recalled his observations of one flight leader of the 436 squadron.

He was on temporary duty at the 436 squadron when he was a lieutenant. At that time, all the fighter squadrons were busy plotting numerous maps which needed to be finished by a certain time, as directed by Tactical Air Command. Working overtime at night was common for all the squadrons. He was very impressed with harmonious climate of 436 squadron while they were working during the night. They were singing and exchanging jokes and made no complaint about working overtime. This was apparently due to the presence of a flight leader who was singing and joking together with his fellows.



Also, outstanding flight leaders lead by example, as stated by an officer : "If a flight leader studies tomorrow's mission, his flight member(s) come to study with him. If a flight leader checks his aircraft along with the required checklist, no one goes to the cockpit with careless preflight check."

### VIII. TOUGH TRAINING, SAFETY BACKUP

Throughout the interviews with the pilots, one could sense that there is a subtle difference in training between the excellent squadrons and others. An instructor pilot of combat Tactics Development Center said: "I can recognize that skills of pilots from certain squadrons are superior to those from some other squadrons." Then, how do the excellent squadrons excel themselves in training? According to the responses of pilots, the answer is maximum training. They simply practice an old saying, "A drop of sweat in training is better than a drop of blood."

#### A. TOUGH TRAINING

Generally, outstanding squadrons try to master the toughest part of tactics, especially in air combat maneuvers.

We start from BFM (Basic Fighting Maneuver), and proceed step by step to advanced ACM (Air Combat Maneuvers). It is tough and risky to play advanced ACM, but we do that, because we are a fighter squadron, not a fighter training squadron,

said one pilot from the 435 squadron. It is more or less the same in other excellent squadrons. They were confident and proud of their way of training. As one pilot stated, "we might be the only squadron which mastered the final chapter of the air combat manual."

## B. SAFETY BACKUP

In excellent squadrons, tough training results in better safety. One officer from the 436 squadron said: "We do not avoid hard training because of the possibilities of risks. Our 20 year worldwide safety record is not the result of avoiding hard training, but rather it is the result of our challenge to both training and safety."

### 1. Training Makes Safety

"Hard training makes us safe; that's why our squadron consciously commits itself to hard training," said one officer. He explained that pilots plan their mission more thoroughly and use more caution when they are performing difficult training.

### 2. Plan the Mission in Detail

Many pilots from excellent squadrons emphasized their elaborate mission preparation. "Our mission starts a day before actual takeoff," said one officer. "We usually begin to study what to do and how to do it as soon as we get the schedule." In other squadrons, a flight leader maintains his own notes which describe the flows of a specific missions measured in time, and tailored for particular maneuvers. His notes are not only helpful to control the entire mission, thus eliminating possible unsafe factors, but they also serve to increase the effectiveness of the mission by removing unnecessary mission set up time.

### C. CREATIVE TRAINING

Because of the proximity of the threat to national security, all the Korean fighter squadrons seek to perform training sorties. Excellent squadrons develop their own ways to use their scarce resources effectively. The 434 squadron initiated a "man-to-man instructor system" to increase the skills of junior rank men. As stated in Chapter IV, there's not much opportunity for squadron commanders to control training missions. First of all, the main worry of squadron commanders is the lack in number of sorties for wing training. Notwithstanding this situation, the 537 squadron developed successful and creative training system. According to the explanation of pilots from that squadron programs were developed to enhance the effectiveness of training on three major missions: Tactical Air Combat, Air to Air Gun, and Air to Ground Bombing. These missions require concentrated training because of their complexity and difficulty. Intensive training is necessary to develop skills and decrease the possibility of accidents. To accomplish this program, a set duration of time is devoted to the training of a designated mission, accompanied with intensive ground school led by expert flight leaders. During that time, other training missions are not scheduled, except for the operational missions ordered by Tactical Air Command.

## IX. RESPECTED LEADERSHIP

Squadron commanders described in this chapter do not represent the current commanders in excellent squadrons. They represent the attributes felt to be important by the fighter pilots whom I interviewed. The descriptions are based on leaders of squadrons whom the pilots believed to be outstanding. However, it should be noted that this chapter is not a description of excellent leadership in general, but describes the common attributes of commanders who led excellent fighter squadrons in the past.

As stated by one officer: "Even with outstanding people, brilliant traditions, or whatever, without excellent leadership, they are nothing." The impacts of leadership are very great upon every aspect of the squadron, such as morale, cohesion, and training. People with whom I have talked seemed to have a consensus on the role of leadership in achieving excellence. They confidently said that leadership is the most important factor affecting squadron performance.

I asked them to evaluate the squadron whose leadership they felt was outstanding. Although there is firm consensus on the importance of leadership, the description of outstanding leadership traits were quite divergent.



Now, let's look at the following squadron leaderships from the pilots' perspective. With minimum level of authority, and in a tough competitive environment, how do the commanders lead their squadrons to excellence? According to the pilots, there is no simple answer. (The author's intention is not to make the results of interviews fit into any of the leadership theories, but just to present them as they were expressed by the interviewees.)

#### A. HE REWARDS

Generally, commanders of excellent squadrons seem to be generous in giving praise and rewards. Even for the smallest achievements, they showed their appreciation.

Body contacts such as shaking hands or slapping backs are not part of the Korean culture. But, shaking hands has been adopted as a way of greeting. Many of the pilots interviewed mentioned that their commanders generously shook their hands when they accomplished difficult tasks and missions. One pilot said that he was very happy when he felt his commander's presence behind him while he was working on the display map. He appreciated the commander seeking him out even when he was only doing something relatively unimportant.

The outstanding leader seems to know the time and the place of giving appropriate rewards or words of praise. One officer said that he felt more close to

his commander when his commander shook his hand, and said "well-done" after his normal night flying schedule.

#### B. CONFIDENT RISK TAKER

As stated in Chapter II, a squadron commander does not have complete control in managing his squadron. In this kind of environment, the squadron commander's toughest decision making area is in training his subordinates. As a first line commander, he is responsible for the squadron's perfect readiness for combat which must be achieved through "high quality as a fighter" and "maximum safety record." There is no tradeoff between these two absolute values.

Many pilots mentioned that two types of leaders emerge under this kind situation. One gives more weight to the safety and the other to training. The former takes weather, climate of the squadron, and other safety factors more into consideration. The latter emphasizes training, and strives to train his pilots in all weather conditions. He trains to the maximum limit of the safety regulations, whereas safety conscious leaders avoid this.

Another example may be drawn from the 533 squadron. Each class of pilots has flying weather limitations. For example, wingman can fly when the ceiling is over 500 feet or higher. Usually the safety conscious commander does not allow wingman to fly at 500 feet ceiling, and instead substitutes a pilot with higher qualifications. This is not the case with the 533 squadron. The commander permitted a

newly qualified wing man to fly at the limit of the weather restriction. For this, he was highly respected by his subordinates. He usually bet on the maximum training, not on the negative possibilities. He won every time. This risk taking attitude reflected his confidence and his trust in his subordinates.

#### C. WHISPER AND CARRY BIG STICK

Oftentimes the pilots mentioned their leader's use of negative reinforcers in addition to rewards, and the methods of handling undesirable behavior in the squadron. The respected commander never expresses open anger to his subordinates; instead he relies on subtle approaches. He simply lays it on the table with a brief comment at the morning briefing expecting his subordinates to be alert to the problem. He knows that there will be peer pressure to eliminate undesirable behaviors.

Then, where is his big stick? The commander is the big stick. His command knows that losing trust of a respected commander is fatal.

#### D. HE CARES

People in an excellent squadron respect their leader because the leader respects them as individuals and cares about them. An outstanding commander is not necessarily the one with talent, experience, or knowledge. Some people have an uncanny ability to coordinate subordinate's individual

efforts into an enormous power simply by sincerely caring for about each of them.

How is this care expressed? A good leader is willing to develop his people, and know the strengths and weaknesses of subordinates. In outstanding squadrons, respected leaders are the ones who work to develop their subordinates by giving them more responsibility. Many commanders try to keep outstanding subordinates in their squadrons to maintain the squadron's high performance, but outstanding leaders are willing to make a sacrifice to promote the subordinate's career.

Here is another example. Combat Tactics Development Center(CTDC), known as a top rate place to work, was recruiting instructors. The 533 Squadron Commander called CTDC and said: "I have good pilot here that I'm sure will more than satisfy your requirement. I don't want to hold him back for myself. Take him, and make him the best."

Out standing commanders even care about the families of their subordinate's. To maintain combat readiness at its peak, all the Korean pilots live in base housing. As an elder or figurehead of the pilot community, the squadron commanders are often involved in the family affairs. However, the smart commanders never appears obvious; rather, they handle problems in a subtle and prudent manner. For example, one officer from the 435 squadron remarked, "When



there was trouble in one pilot's home, the commander gave him three days off for. and asked him to solve the trouble he had with his wife. Sometimes, he invited the parents of the troublemaker to visit their son's home."

#### E. HE LISTENS TO HIS SQUADRON

Excellent squadron commanders know their squadrons in minute detail. They know their pilots' individual histories, even their preferences in relation with others, or subordinates' personal problems. A scheduling officer from the 436 squadron said: "when I was asked to change a pilot's schedule, I could guess that he might have some problems, such as drinking or family discord." In other excellent squadrons, they are the same. How do commanders sense problems? It is because they listen to their squadron members. As one officer said, "he had a habit of saying 'what's new?' to us."

A pilot from the 537 squadron described his commander: "At a party, he never stays at the head table. He goes around to all the tables and exchanges pleasantries with fellow pilots. He enjoys talking and joking with his pilots." Another commander arranged to have a big board where pilots could write any thing they wanted to say anonymously.



## F. LEADERSHIP STYLES IN EXCELLENT SQUADRONS

More than 20 commanders of excellent squadrons were mentioned by the pilots I interviewed. They stated the excellent squadrons achieved their superiority due to a number of commanders who contributed to the excellence during their tour. From those commanders identified, some common features of an excellent leadership style could be determined. Some can be called autocratic, others can be described as participative leader; but one thing is apparent: there is no "laissez-faire" leadership style. Excellent leaders are more likely to be found in between autocratic and participative leadership style, but not in the extreme end of the range.

Which commander is best--those who are people-oriented or those who are task-oriented. oriented. Throughout the interviews, people-oriented leadership was frequently mentioned by the pilots, and task-oriented leadership were rarely mentioned. But, one should not assume that task oriented leadership is absent. It may be caused by a contrast effect, since the attitudes of commanders toward task accomplishment are more or less the same for all the commanders. A lt. col officer relate this insight excellence of command:

I think that the excellent leader is a farmer who cares and works with a cow. A farmer cares his cow like his family because the cow is an important power source to farming. When he goes out to a field and comes home from work he always follows his cow, since a cow knows where

and how to go. A farmer communicates with a cow by three simple words: stop, go, and turn. There's no whips for a cow, since a cow is not a tricky animal.

## X. THE U.S AIR FORCE AND KOREAN AIR FORCE

This chapter includes a comparison of outstanding fighter squadrons of the United States and those of the Korean Air Force, based on the study of excellence in the USAF Fighter Squadron.<sup>11</sup>

### A. COMPARISON OF SQUADRON LEADERSHIP

Common characteristics of excellent squadron leadership in both Air Forces are "respect" and "care." There is little difference as to the reasons why they are respected and how they care for their people. According to Forde's study, excellent American squadron commanders are respected for their ability as a fighter pilot, and their direct, honest communication with their subordinates. Also, excellent U.S. squadron commanders in care for their subordinates by controlling the day's work hours and free weekends. In the Korean Air Force, excellent squadron commanders are respected for their people-oriented attitude and leading skills such as the use of rewards and showing their bravery by taking risks in training. In terms of caring, excellent commanders in the Korean Air Force fighter squadron extend

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<sup>11</sup>For more understanding of this chapter, please see the study of Hugh A. Forde, 'Excellence in Tactical Fighter Squadron' [Ref. 5: pp. 23-48].

their range of care to the family area. U.S. Air Force commander's concerns about families are not mentioned in Forde's study.

Differences in excellent leadership in the two countries exist in the area of communication and leadership styles. Excellent squadron commanders of the U.S fighter squadrons communicate directly with their subordinates, where as Korean excellent squadron commanders communicate via the hierarchy such as operations officer and flight leaders. In leadership styles, differences emerge more clearly. Excellent squadron leadership in the USAF is explained as leadership by example; leadership by words is perhaps more important in the KAF. To clean the bathroom, excellent U.S. commanders will take a brush according to Forde's study, but in the Korean Air Force, if one does so, this would be regarded as insulting and punishing toward his subordinates.

## B. CULTURES OF EXCELLENT SQUADRONS

Even with difference in nationalities and societal cultures, the organizational cultures are very close to each other.

### 1. We Are the Best

For pilots in both countries, the attitude of excellent squadrons, even if not spoken outright, is that "We Are the Best." Yet, there is a difference in expressing this attitude. A USAF pilot says: " we just quietly come into

town and kick tail," while a Korean pilot expresses his squadron as: "Anything else is rubbish."

## 2. You Are We

In Forde's study, a "we" attitude is mentioned in a teamwork description. Actually, most of his quotes begin with "we." Likewise, the author sensed this "we" attitude during the interviews. In Korean, the word "we" is often used as a substitute of "I" or "my." However, it was apparent that pilots from excellent squadrons usually called their squadron "our squadron," while the others called their squadron as "the squadron" (meaning the squadron I belonged to), or "777 squadron." This attitude seems to be one of the common features which appears in the excellent squadrons in both countries.

## 3. Living Legends

Squadron heroes appear to be unique to the U.S Air Force. In the Korean Air Force, although some of the Air Force heroes were mentioned by the pilots, squadron heroes were not found during the interviews. This may be due to different experiences of each Air Force.

But descriptions of people, like living legends, are same in both countries. Forde's study said: "They are also experts on the technical details of the weapon system. But more importantly, they are unit oriented, willing to forego personal glory by sharing their expertise with the squadron." In the Korean Air Force excellent fighter



squadrons they are described in Chapter VII. There is no need to describe the living legends of Korean excellent fighter squadrons because the only difference is their names and squadrons to which they belonged.

#### 4. Peer Pressure

Peer pressure also appears to be common in the excellent squadrons of both countries. However, in the U.S Air Force, peer pressures helps to accelerate the performance of the squadron, while in Korean excellent squadrons, it appears to reduce undesirable behavior.

### C. TRAINING

In both countries' excellent squadrons, training appears to be one of the important attributes for maintaining excellence. Some items such as realistic training, attention to details, and creativity are commonly mentioned, although the details are slightly different. However, it appears unique to the US Air Force excellent squadrons that ability overrides seniority in qualification of a pilots' grade.

### D. INTERMEDIATE LEADERSHIP

Flight leaders (or flight commanders) seems to be an important group in both Air Force's excellent squadrons. They are called the "backbone of the squadron" in the U.S Air Force, and the "golden members" or "core of the squadron" in the Korean Air Force. In a similar manner, they

are delegated by their commanders, and lead their subordinates positively. However, the roles of the flight commander of the U.S Air Force seem to be weighted on the flying and task area, while Korean flight leaders have unique roles such as a communication bridge. This difference may be due to the culture of Korea, and the short term of commander's tour.

#### E. TEAM WORK/COHESION

In Korean excellent squadrons, cohesion is strongly emphasized, while in the U.S excellent squadrons emphasis is on strong teamwork. The examples defining cohesion are similar; but the nuances seem to be slightly different. For example, in the U.S Air Force, good teamwork is based on independence of each person's responsibility where as in the KAF, strong cohesion implies interdependency on each other's capabilities. It is interesting to compare the similarities in the development of teamwork/cohesion in both countries, through athletic games, informal meetings, etc.

#### F. SUMMARY

It is of value to learn that the excellent squadrons of both the USAF and KAF have similar features. They are proud of their squadrons, and confident about their jobs. Also, some theoretical concepts such as delegation of authority, cohesiveness and performance relationship appear equally important in both countries air service.

But also there are differences. First, communication in each Air Force varies. In U.S fighter squadrons, communication flows in an open and direct manner between vertical and lateral relationships. In Korean squadrons, communication flows via hierarchical channels as shown in Chapter VII.

Second, in dealing with longevity and talent, U.S fighter squadrons uniquely place priority on talent. In the Korean Air Force, seniority has more value than talent.

Third, in exercising authority, U.S squadron commanders are evaluated on their decision making role, while Korean commanders are weighted on their figurehead role. For example, U.S squadron commanders devote much time to making decisions as to how to deploy their squadrons, and how to allocate their resources. In the KAF, squadron commanders do not have unlimited authority. Korean commanders of excellent squadrons devote themselves to establishment of squadron cohesion and harmony by exercising legitimate authority and traditional figurehead authority earned by seniority.

Last, in Korean Air Force squadrons, close relationship between the family and squadron appear to be unique; in U.S Air Force squadrons, concern for enlisted personnel appears to be unique.

The variations listed can be attributed to differences in culture, structure, and resources available. But a close analysis of the similarities and differences reveals that

the facets of excellent squadrons in both countries' Air Force are basically the same, with slight variation in detail.

## XI. CONCLUSION

This thesis has described how excellent squadrons are viewed through the eyes of fighter pilots from Korea. This is only a preliminary study to be followed by additional research. However, this study is valuable to gain a glimpse of what the Korean excellent fighter squadrons looks like and how the excellence is achieved. A general once said that the differences between superior and average squadrons might be small. In a sense, this might be true if only the difference in numbers and measurable quantities are considered. But the comparison cannot be measured because the differences are due to squadron members' willingness, dedication, training, devotion to duty, respect for leadership, and the individual's ability, initiative, and bravery.

### A. WE ARE UNIQUE

This study reflects that excellent squadrons are a product of their culture. Broadly speaking, culture influences three different but interdependent aspects: the first is unit morale--confidence in what they are doing: second, the endeavor is task-oriented culture--unit members try their best to accomplish their mission; lastly, the people-oriented culture offsets and complements task-oriented culture as illustrated in Chapter III.



## B. WE ARE COHESIVE

Strong cohesiveness through harmonious relation is an important facet of excellent squadrons. Factors such as fair distribution of rewards and recognition, and inspirational leadership are sources of cohesion which promote loyalty and obedience to commanders or seniors.

## C. WE ARE SATISFIED

Importantly, excellent squadrons have on-going processes which continuously satisfy the needs of their people such as rewards, recognition, responsibility, and faster upward mobility which proves Maslow's need theory. This theory applies to the Korean military organization, especially to the Air Force fighter squadron.

## D. WE CARE FOR EACH OTHER

What does caring about each other mean? Pay and promotions may have made people work; social norms may sustain loyalty to the squadron; but, that is not enough. Excellent squadrons provide worthwhile places for pilots to commit their lives and energies where their commanders and associates care about them and their families. To excellent squadron members, work and homes are closely related and support of each other.

#### E. WE CHALLENGE THROUGH TOUGH TRAINING

In all the excellent squadrons, training is maintained at the highest standard to meet the needs of reality(i.e., the North Korean threat). The only differences are in the creative and effective manner employed in training. With resource constraints, development of effective training must be augmented by concentrated training and private instructors.

#### F. WE DELEGATE

In excellent squadrons, flight leaders are out in the front. In the air and on the ground, they plan and implement all tasks assigned by their commanders. The position of strong flight leaders in excellent squadrons is not accidental, since they have had thorough training and education under insightful commanders who know the merits of delegation of authority and responsibility.

#### G. WE RESPECT OUR COMMANDER

One of the main reasons that commanders deserve respect is that they accomplish goals through the people, and not through the system. They never pull subordinates toward the goals; instead, they inspire their subordinates to work toward the goals.

The author feels that commanders are respected by subordinates and by the members of other squadrons. Are they excellent fighter pilots? The answer is either yes or no.

Some of the commanders were acclaimed as excellent fighters, and some of them were told that they were not as good as others. A commander's outstanding flying skill may be sufficient reason for respect, but not necessarily the ultimate factor. Commanders in excellent squadrons seem to be respected because of the way they deal with all matters relating to their squadrons. They respond sensitively to the needs of their subordinates. They do not tinker with what is well. Above all, they understand their people. They lead the people, not the system.

#### H. AUTHOR'S COMMENT

The attributes may not new: they may lie within the range of basic concepts of organizational theory. However, the author can say confidently that excellence is accomplished through people. Commanders of excellent squadrons inspire people; they do not change the system. Processes of excellent squadrons are developed and maintained for the people; cultures of excellent squadrons are formulated by the people; and eventually, excellence comes from the people.

In a military context, where every squadron has the same resources and structure, excellence must be a function of

the people. This thesis endeavors to explain the attitude and dedication of KAF fighter squadrons.

## XII. RECOMMENDATIONS

### A. TO ALL FIGHTER PILOTS

#### 1. Know Your People

Excellence comes from ordinary people who are motivated to devote themselves to achieving excellent performance in their squadrons. These facets of excellence; uniqueness, creativeness, and dedication are not accidental. They are developed and maintained through people who are creative and willing to achieve the best. These are not secrets; the key to excellence is people. Do not look around for the secrets; instead, understand your people, what they want, think, and how they behave.

#### 2. Care for Your People

If you know and understand your fellow pilots are, you also know how to treat them. As shown in this study, they are not actors who simply play a role directed by a script. They are human beings who want to learn, to be developed, and to be recognized. Moreover, they want to be considered members of the family. Why don't we do that? They are, in fact, members of a family, as has been shown in stories of "caring" squadron.



## B. TO ALL SQUADRON COMMANDERS

### 1. Delegate Responsibility

This study was developed to show how pilots view their commanders. They see you as the leader of all functional roles such as planning, organizing, controlling, and coordinating. In reality, you are the supervisors of the first line unit in the Korean Air Force. Your subordinates want you to behave like inspirational leaders who will lead his squadron in his own way. It is your choice whether you become a respected leader or a micro manager. Direct control over your squadron is very easy since pilots are obedient, and by doing so you may get quick results from your input into the squadron, but think about what you can accomplish during your year of command. If you have read the stories from the Chapter called "FLIGHT LEADER CENTERED SQUADRON," you should confirm the results of delegation; how they were creative and faithful; how they were dedicated in accomplishing their tasks. Allow them to have more responsibility; let them learn and develop through delegation of authority. It is not easy to wait and see them go through thorn-bushes; it is hard to be patient. But allow them to learn from mistakes, if their mistakes are not serious. In the long run, you will realize that you really were more in control than was the case in using the direct push-pull control approach.

### C. FOR RESEARCHERS

Because of constraints on data collection, this study is only a preliminary study of excellence in Korean Air Force fighter squadrons. It should be the basis for further research on the views of generals and senior officers. The views and opinions of general and senior officers should be explored more fully to define comprehensive excellence criteria. Comparative studies with average squadrons are recommended in order to identify the relative strength of certain attributes which exist between excellent squadrons and average squadrons. Also, it is recommended that a study of excellence in maintenance squadrons be conducted, since performance of maintenance units is one of the vital factors for the overall performance of the Korean Air Force.

While doing the study, two important questions surfaced. First: Is the commander's current term of office an adequate period of time to exercise one's leadership? Second: Is the commander's authority and responsibility of the commander strong enough to develop his fighter pilots into an excellent squadron that can meet the need? It is recommended that a higher authority consider these short-comings and recommendations with a view toward better inspirational utilization, and motivation of, the combat-ready squadrons.

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